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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 007419

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/02/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [TU](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: MFA CAUCASUS OFFICIAL ON THE THREAT OF SECESSION  
IN GEORGIA

REF: ANKARA 6198

(U) Classified by CDA Robert Deutsch, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.5  
(B) and (D).

1. (C) Summary: On December 2, Turkish MFA Caucasus Department Head Murat Adali said Turkey would work to prevent Ajarian secession in Georgia. He was more cautious about Turkey's willingness to play an effective role in countering Abkhazian secession. End Summary.

Ajaria

2. (C) Embassy deputy political counselor discussed the threat of regional secession in Georgia with MFA Caucasus Department Head Murat Adali on December 2. Adali claimed Turkey would work to prevent Ajarian secession, which he called "a real danger." He said the GOT was in contact with Ajarian regional leader Abashidze through its consulate in Batumi. Abashidze, he said, was unhappy at Turkey's attempts to find commercial routes bypassing Ajaria. However, Adali claimed Turkey still had "leverage" in the region. He professed to be worried about increased Russian influence in the event of secession, including over the port of Batumi.

Abkhazia

3. (C) Adali was more reluctant about Turkey's willingness to play an effective role in countering Abkhazian secession. He said Turkey's large community of Abkhazian-origin citizens -- he claimed there were 450,000 -- were sympathetic to Abkhazian separatist ambitions. This created a public opinion problem when it came to Turkey advocating against Abkhazian secession, he asserted. "They complain they get a better reception at the Russian Embassy than at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," he averred. Moreover, he claimed, the GOT had difficulty controlling the private activities of citizens who sympathized with Abkhazian separatism. Adali added pointedly that Caucasian-origin citizens (Circassian) were also influential in Turkey's intelligence services.

4. (C) Comment: Adali's mixed message reflects the fluid policy debate and weakness in the MFA, other analytic centers in the bureaucracy, and think tanks. Over the past three months, MFA officials have repeatedly expressed the desire for closer U.S.-Turkish cooperation in the Caucasus (reftel). An invigorated bilateral Caucasus dialogue with Turkey can help focus Turkish policy more in line with U.S. interests. End Comment.  
EDELMAN